

FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: July 14, 2016

Agenda Item: Re-Instate Seasonal Closure of White Bear Fishing Access Site

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 Min

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Background: White Bear Fishing Access Site (FAS) is located on the edge of Great Falls. The site has become an attraction for non-sporting type use during summer months. The site promotes unsavory activities during summer months (June-September) such as under-age use of alcohol, illegal drug use, violent behavior, public disturbance, vandalism and litter. This activity has caused numerous disturbances with neighbors and other site users and requires a high law enforcement presence and high demand on maintenance resources. Neighbors have expressed concerns about their safety and security by users of the FAS. In 2015, the Commission closed the site from June-September to eliminate this type of behavior while a long term solution to trade the site was being explored. The trade option being explored fell through in June 2016 due to an access easement problem at the trade site.

Public Involvement Process & Results Both before and after the closure the public had frequent reports and complaints about users at the site. The neighbors approached the Commission in September 2014 during the open-microphone session and raised concerns about their safety. The public commented during the 2015 seasonal closure process. FWP staff meet with the Homeowners Association frequently to address complaints and concerns for safety. The public expects the Department to control the problems at this site. The 2015 seasonal closure addressed the public's concerns. With no seasonal closure in place in 2016, the historical problems have returned. The public continues to contact the Department through direct phone calls, TIPMONT and County law enforcement.

Alternatives and Analysis: The 2015 seasonal closure eliminated the problems in 2015. In 2016, with no closure in place, the problems have returned. A seasonal closure is a proven method to eliminate this behavior at the site and ensure public/neighbor safety. A closure would allow FWP law enforcement staff to issue citations for trespass or violation of the closure rule at anytime during the summer months, thereby removing any incentive for these individuals to visit the site. The seasonal closure would end in September and the site would then allow duck and big-game hunters to access the river in the fall and early-winter months.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP is asking the Commission to re-institute a seasonal closure from July 15 through September 6, 2016 in an attempt to control use at the site. If a closure is in place, FWP can enforce the Commission rule. The Department will continue to search for a long term solution for trade or disposal of the site.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Commission re-instate the seasonal closure of the White Bear FAS recommended by FWP.